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## BOOK REVIEWS.

STUDIES IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT. By Rev. The Hon. E. Lyttleton, M. A. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1905. Pp. 392.

It is a pleasure to be able to welcome a really good book on the Sermon on the Mount. These studies are the work of a clear, strong thinker, who is in deep sympathy with his subject.

The book, as Mr. Lyttleton tells us in the Preface, is not a complete work; for it only deals with the actual precepts recorded in the three chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel. Scarcely anything is said about such controversial subjects as the relation between the Matthean and Lukan reports; nor does it touch on critical and textual questions except when they seem to be bound up with the interpretation of the words. It is "intended for those thoughtful students who wish to get hold of the meaning of the words as they are handed down."

The starting point of these studies was the spontaneous and unstinted admiration professed far and wide for the Sermon on the Mount. The admiration, the author believes, depends, whether consciously or unconsciously, on the main idea of the Sermon. In the Introduction he inquires what that idea is.

The Sermon is not admired because it satisfies human desire for exhaustive and simple directions to guide them in the conduct of life. Its precepts are not exhaustive. They are not intended to be: there are whole tracts of human life on which, apparently, the words of Jesus shed no ray of light. Nor are they simple. Many of them are paradoxical. They do not save us the trouble of thinking, but on the contrary powerfully stimulate thought. "Almost the first principle which a young student lays down for himself in interpreting the precepts is that a literal obedience is not required: we must obey them in *spirit*." But obedience in spirit is more difficult than literal obedience. It is easier and more simple to turn the cheek to the smiter than to act on the principle—Don't retaliate. In the interest of the smiter it is well sometimes to hit back. And the complex significance of actions must be considered in determining their character. Life is not simple, consequently it cannot be guided by simple rules.

The precepts of the Discourse are obviously not simple and

exhaustive. But they have one prevailing characteristic. They are all based ultimately on a certain view of God's relation to man, namely, that we are the children of a Heavenly Father, who cares for us and guides our lives. This idea is "so deeply stamped on every phrase and so determines the treatment of every topic, that the admiration stirred among men by the whole Discourse must be largely and mainly due to this characteristic." Man has an instinctive yearning belief in a God who cares how we fare in this life of ours. And Christ's teaching throughout appeals to it. Unless this be so, it is impossible to explain the high estimate in which these words are held. For they advocate aims, motives, and ideas which are independent of and often antagonistic to those most urgently suggested by ordinary human life. In the Beatitudes *e. g.* the speaker goes clean contrary to the maxims and ideas of life which prevail and always have prevailed among mankind. Blessedness is to be obtained by a simple trust in our Father in Heaven, who is ever ready to give good things to them that ask Him. A consciousness of sonship is "completely sufficient to give all needful encouragement to control our waywardness, to clear our vision for the true prospective and to quicken us with an infinite inspiration—fresh, buoyant, and eternal." Guided by this idea, Mr. Lyttleton unfolds the significance of the various precepts with great insight and freshness. He makes us feel vividly and powerfully the appeal of the words of the Master. In explaining the *admiration* of men for Christ's teaching, he does not attach sufficient importance to the setting of the Sermon. It cannot be separated from the rest of the gospel narratives. The singular attractiveness of the whole life and teaching of Jesus is associated in our minds with all His words. Also Mr. Lyttleton lays, perhaps, too much emphasis on the consciousness of sonship as distinguished from the fact of sonship. As a son of the Father, 'man is made in the image of God, and whether we have an instinctive yearning belief in a God who cares how we fare in this life of ours, or not, the words of One who was conscious of His sonship must appeal to what is deepest and truest in our natures. We recognize our native language, and respond instinctively to an expression which appeals to the family dignity. How far we will try to carry out these precepts without faith in a God who cares is another question. The only adequate motive seems to be belief in the Fatherhood of God.

In a chapter (xxxii) on the meaning of Christian, it is pointed

out that the same prominence of the idea of Fatherhood is observable in the life of Jesus as in His teaching. Hence, the prevailing popular conception of Christianity as a revelation of conduct only, is false. "To imitate Christ is to imitate One who first and foremost was religious: that is, whose life was essentially and perpetually a life of prayer." Prayerfulness was not in His case a "separable adjunct of a life of lofty morality," but its central characteristic. Further, of all Christ's activities the only one adopted for imitation is prayer. His "actions refuse to be classified into categories or described according to any system, and seem almost designed to warn us against imitation except in the one particular that He spent time in prayer to His Heavenly Father." To think that we could live His life without access to the source of His inspiration would be folly. The strenuous and uninterrupted prayerfulness of Jesus may even be taken as "explaining to some extent the utter mystery of such a character appearing in the history of mankind." Because praying is a receiving of divine life and strength, and with it "the character, though adorable in its spotless excellence, becomes to some extent intelligible."

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SOKRATES UND DIE ETHIK. Von Hermann Nohl. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1904.

Nietzsche in an aphorism in "Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft," has commented in his strange ironical way in the last words of Socrates as recorded in the *Phaedo*, "I owe a cock to Æsculapius," and marked it as a sign of the deep hidden pessimism of Socrates, of his conviction that life was really a disease. As we read those words in Nietzsche, we can take them, as we must take so much in "Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft," as suggestive, disquieting, enlightening, but as on the whole misleading and untrue. It is characteristic of the standpoint from which Herr Nohl regards Socrates, that he quite simply and seriously takes these words as indicative of the deepest feelings and sentiments of Socrates. They show that at death "he felt himself released from the illness of this life." This is a book on Socrates written from the standpoint of that modern individualism and scepticism which finds in Nietzsche its chief exponent. "The conviction of the irrationality